or till the next normal year whichever is earlier. This relief is to be extended on the merits of each case.

(ii) Banks should not charge penal interest nor should they compound the interest. Banks should also ensure that in the case of short term loans, the total interest payable by small and marginal farmers does not exceed the principal.

(iii) Banks should stop auctioning of gold ornaments pledged with them. Such action should be taken only as a last resort when all other avenues for recovery of dues have failed and that too after obtaining clearance from higher levels in each case.

(iv) Banks may extend consumption loan facilities upto Rs. 500/- per family.

(v) Banks should sanction loans for allied activities like dairy, poultry, etc. to the affected farmers when demanded.

Transfer of Office Bearers of Regional Rural Bank Employees Association

968. SHRI ASHIS SEN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the reasons for which the Chairman of Kapurthala-Ferozpur Kshetriya Gramin Bank issued transfer orders on the functonaries of the Association of the employees of the Bank soon after the formation of the Association which is a legitimate right of the employees; and

(b) what action Government propose to take against such unfair labour practice and restrain the Chairman of the Bank?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANIL SHASTRI): (a) The Chairman, Kapurthala-Ferozpur Kshetriya Gramin Bank has reported that the transfer of the emploees of the Bank including the functionaries of the staff union/association have been made purely on administrative grounds and for no other reasons.

(b) Does not arise.

Protection of Jute Industry

969. SHRI MOHAMMED AMIN: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be please to state:

(a) what steps Government propose to take to protect the jute industry;

(b) what is the number of units producing synthetic packaging materails all over the country; and

(c) what is the number of workers and the amount of capital invests in such synthetic packaging industry?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) A statement indicating steps taken by the Government to protect the jute industry is enclosed. (*See* below)

(b) and (c) There are around 500 synthetic units spread all over the country. The industry provides employment to over 1,25,000 workers. The total investment in the industry is of the order of Rs. 400 crores.

Statement listing steps taken by Government to protect the Jute Industry

Government have recently provided several reliefs and incentives to jute industry. These are:

(i) Duty free import of raw jute against export of jute goods under the advance licencing scheme from April 1989 onward in order to make our jute goods internationally competitive.

(ii) Waiver of customs duty on import of a number of jute machi-

nery items and accessories upto 31.12.90 for the purpose of accelerating process of modernisation and diversification in the jute sector.

(iii) Complete waiver of excise duty w.e.f. 20-3-90 under the Union Budget for 1990-91 on a number of diversified jute products such as Jute Blankets, Jute Felt, Jute Mats and Mattings, Jute Carpets and Bleached, Dyed and Printed Jute Fabrics containing more than 50 per cent by weight of Jute Fibre.

(iv) Exemption from excise duty on Jute yarn and Jute Fabrics used captively for manufacture of such products as mentioned at number *(iii)* above.

(v) Excise duty waiver on Jute Yarn for producton of jute based hand-looms and Handicfarts.

(vi) Excise exemption on Jute Fabrics used by Handicrafts sector subject to certain prescribed conditions.

2. In recognition of importance of jute industry and in the interest of the production of Raw Jute and Jute Packaging Materials and of persons engaged in production thereof, Government have already taken a number of other measures, including;

(a) Implementation of the Special Agricultural Jute Development Programme in all the jute growing States through the Ministry of Agriculture.

(b) Implementation of the Jute Modernisation Fund Scheme under the auspices of the All India Financial Institutions.

(c) Support to Jute Corporation of India and other State level procurement Organisations to build up warehousing and other infrastructural facilities for the jute growing farmers.

(d) Assistance to jute R & D Institutions for product Development and Diversification.

(e) Implementation of the Internal and External Market Assistance Schemes through the Jute Manufacturers Development Council (JMDC).

(f) Enactment of Jute Packaging Material (Compulsory Use in Packing Commodities) Act, 1987 for giving necessary protection to the jute industry against competition from the HDPE Bags units in the domestic market

Receding of Glaciers in the Himalayas

970. SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the report which appeared in the Hindi daily 'Jansata' of 24 March, 1990 to the effect that glaciers in the Himalayas are receding;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and whether Government propose to investigate the problem in depth; and

(c) what are the likely consequences of the process in the near future and in the long run?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI MANUBHAI KOTADIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Systematic glaciological studies on a few gaciers have been carried out since 1973. The studies have revealed that these glaciers are in a state of recession. The retreat or advancement of glaciers is guided by general climatic fluctuations. The present global climate is generally warming up which is leading to the retreat of glaciers.

(c) The effect of reccesion of glaciers in the near future is inconsequential as far as changes are concerned. But the pattern of flows in the rivers fed by the snow melt processes may get somewhat affected. For assessment of the long term effects, intensive studies will be required.